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Editorials

Johnson milepost

In these very partisan political times, states are frequently labeled as red or blue to denote party preference.

But if you had to pick a color for Connecticut, it would probably be purple. For the most part, the state prefers moderates on both sides of the political aisle. Our red politicians often act like blues and the blues frequently act like reds.

Republican Congresswoman Nancy Johnson embodies the state's preference for the middle ground and it is no surprise that she recently became the longest-serving House of Representatives member in state history, surpassing former U.S. Rep. Robert Giaimo of North Haven.

She is a Republican who hails from the blue-collar Democratic town of New Britain. At a time when her own party is in danger of being hijacked by far-right extremists she is a welcome voice of moderation.

Her leadership role in Medicaid reform and prescription drug benefits has raised her national profile. But no one will ever accuse this petite grandmother of ignoring local issues. She has been a leader in helping Meriden secure funds for flood control, a new post office and the city's downtown rede-

velopment initiative.

Those who don't know her well might conclude that her moderation is a result of her hesitancy to make a stand. Nothing could be farther from the truth. She has consistently shown a willingness to criticize extremists in both political parties.

Winning 12 consecutive terms was not as easy as it is might be for representatives who come from solidly Democratic or Republican areas. Johnson's district, now the fifth, formerly the sixth, is a mix of medium-size cities like Meriden, which are traditionally Democratic, and suburbs like Cheshire, traditionally Republican. In order to win, Johnson has had to attract a fair number of Democrats. She has accomplished this through her active constituent work, proving that there is no political ideology involved with fixing roads and bridges and alike.

It's not necessarily a formula that would work in other parts of the country, but it suits Connecticut just fine.

Congratulations Congresswoman Johnson on your 12 consecutive terms in Congress. It's a well-earned record that will be difficult to surpass.